

Here To Talk: Report

<https://eleanorhales1.wixsite.com/filmprogrammer/about>

Please follow the above link to access the website for Here To Talk.

Here To Talk presents curated programmes that encourage discussions around societal issues, through the shared experience of cinema. Each series challenges the viewer to question their opinions and experiences. Supported by a range of collective online screenings, Q&As with relevant professionals and curated support materials, Here To Talk aims to create a safe space in which to consider and share stories we see on screen.

Inspiration

The idea for Here To Talk came from my research into content warnings. The BBFC launched new Classification Guidelines in 2019 which encourage wider use of content warnings and consistency across online and physical platforms (BBFC, 2019), and through my professional work I have noticed audience expectations of these warnings. This led me to think about what more could be done to support people affected by traumatic issues shown in film.

The first series of programmes is OH MOTHER. Based on my interest in the increase in reproductive rights films (Horton, 2021), I explored how the film industry approaches maternity as a whole. Reproductive rights are a topic of particular contest currently, particularly in the US, so this felt like an important topic to approach.

Online curation

Online curation has seen a popularity increase, especially after COVID-19, and new technologies help make these easier and more accessible than ever (Mutlu, 2019). Online curation increases geographical accessibility, allowing me to market to communities where these issues are prevalent. Online curation can also make evaluation simpler. I will be able to assess viewing figures and receive feedback more instantaneously. When curating the series I considered the process of evaluation by looking at Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which can be briefly categorised (Wood, 2021) as:

- Popularity - will the series prove popular and sell tickets?
- Social engagement - do I feel this series is helping society in some way?
- Diversity of audience - is the programme appealing to a range of viewers?
- Diversity of films - does the programme support a range of film categories and why?
- Uniqueness - am I providing the opportunity to discover unique films?
- Excellence - am I presenting films that represent a degree of excellence in their craft?

In particular, social engagement can be achieved by curating the series online. Online curation supports my aim of making the audience comfortable whilst discussing difficult issues, encouraging them to engage with the subject. Viewers can also decide when to watch and stop the films if they need time to digest the subject matter.

Considerations

A concern for this series is that audience members may find the topic too distressing. To counteract this, I made sure to programme a range of genres and types of films to appeal to a diverse audience. OH MOTHER aims to portray the huge range of emotions surrounding motherhood by using films with different approaches to the subject. This includes films of different lengths and genres, from drama to comedy.

Each programme offers two feature-length films, one as a collective screening and Q&A event, alongside three short films. During the collective screening and Q&A, viewers can use the chat function anonymously to create discussion. The website will also have a discussion board for each programme. These options will require moderation and this staffing will need to be included in the budget.

Ticketing

As these programmes discuss issues around class and disability, these factors should not affect an audience member's ability to attend the events. To help this, I have included reduced rates for those that are unwaged, students, over 60 or registered disabled.

When audience members purchase a ticket, they gain access to a link for the films and an invitation to the corresponding collective event. To minimise the risk of illegal sharing, individual links will be created and each film can only be viewed for 24 hours after pressing play.

Q&As

The collective screenings and Q&As will be hosted monthly to encourage the retention of audiences. This will give viewers time to appreciate each programme, encouraging them to purchase further programmes.

The Q&A events have been curated to appeal to wider audiences, acting as gateways for the audience to discover the lesser-known programmed films. This combination of acclaimed and offbeat films also compliments the budget, balancing the screening fees between big releases and independent productions.

Saint Frances (2019) had a very limited cinema release but was well received by critics and gained a large online following. This limited cinema release reduced opportunities for collective discussion around the film's topic, which I hope to remedy in this programme. The film also sets the tone for the series, by showing that OH MOTHER approaches difficult topics in a serious yet uplifting tone. I chose to host the Q&A with Tina Lesley due to her position as a medical health professional, who has a personal interest in ending the stigma around abortion and improving reproductive rights. I am aware Tina has experience in hosting film Q&As as well, having attended her panel for the film *The 8th (2020)*.

For the BEING section, I wanted to programme a film that could reach a wide diversity of audiences who may otherwise not be interested in the series. Anime films have a passionate audience and I have seen a rise in their programming, particularly last year due to the BFI 2021 Japan season. The topic of motherhood is presented subtly throughout *Wolf Children (2012)*, using fantasy as a method to portray stories of single parenthood. I decided to host the Q&A with Laura Godfrey-Isaacs as she is both an artist/illustrator and midwife. This gives

her the unique perspective of being able to professionally analyse the themes of motherhood whilst also commenting on the beauty of the animation.

I felt it was important to programme a Q&A around a documentary as viewers can relate their personal experiences to the real-life stories on the screen. *The (Dead Mothers) Club (2014)* examines different stories of dealing with grief, including accounts from well-known actresses. Although this could be seen as sensationalist, offering an insight into the personal lives of famous people can be used as a marketing tool due to celebrity fascination. The Q&A will be held with Dr Louise Richardson, the founder of Grief York, which looks at portrayals of grief in arts and culture.

References:

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Mutlu, N. (2019). Research on curating films for online platforms and festivals. *Humanities and Social Services Review*. [Online], 9(1), pp.145-152. Available from: https://www.academia.edu/41939508/RESEARCH_ON_CURATING_FILMS_FOR_ONLINE_PLATFORMS_AND_FESTIVALS [Accessed 5 March 2022].

Saint Frances. (2019) Directed by Alex Thompson. New York: Oscilloscope.

The (Dead Mothers) Club. (2014) Directed by Carlye Rubin and Katie Green. New York: HBO.

The 8th. (2020). Directed by Lucy Kennedy, Aideen Kane, Maeve O'Boyle. Ireland: Black Tabby.

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